462 Tilling the ricefields, hunting, fishing and managing rafts and
241 pirogues take up about six months of the year. The rest of the time they rest and enjoy themselves. The status of women in Laos, although not as low and painful as that of other women of Asiatic races, is nevertheless not as pleasant as that of their husbands. In fact, all the petty farming tasks fall on them. They perform all the household labors, care for the poultry yard and the livestock, etc. They do the cooking, decorticate the paddy, go and fetch wood and water, spin, weave and dye cotton and silk, take care of the children, etc. Less [182] fortunate than her husband, the Laotian woman has no leisure except on holidays, and even then she has to make all the preparations without letting her daily occupations suffer.

142 Of ordinary height, generally well made and even elegant of
562 figure, the Laotian woman has a friendly face and is not without either grace or coquetry before her marriage. This does not mean that there are no homely girls, but these are rather an exception. As she grows older and worn from bearing children the Laotian woman loses much of her early grace, but in spite of everything she retains her joyousness, her high spirits and her very pronounced taste for celebrations when there is singing and feasting.

• 862 Laotian mothers worship their children. They take great care
858 of them and often push their weakness for their children to such a point as to prolong the period of breast-feeding, often beyond the child's fourth year.

342 Dwellings. Like all the representatives of the Thai family, the
574 Laotians inhabit houses which are rectangular in shape and are always raised one or two meters above the GROUND on piles. Wood and bamboo, in the form of beams, framing members, rafters, door and window casings, partitions, doors, windows, floors and shingles, are used to build houses, without the use of any nails, all joints and assemblies being fastened together with rattan.

The dimensions of the houses vary greatly and depend on the number of families that they are designed to shelter. Verandas with roofs which are sharply inclined and come down quite low are placed around the house, mainly on the south and west, to temper the heat of the sun and serve as a vestibule, a reception hall or a workshop. The family stays there during the day, as on a sort of neutral ground where people who are coming and going can be received without transgressing custom, which decrees that no one except members of the family and close friends shall have access to the inner apartments, which form the private home of the house's inhabitants.